

# Mansionization



White Paper Discussion  
City of Rockville, Maryland

July 25, 2005

## Table of Contents

I.	Introduction.....	1
II.	General Issues.....	2
	A.    Potential Concerns Related to Mansionization .....	3
	B.    Potential Benefits of Mansionization.....	3
III.	Alternatives .....	4
	A.    Mass Regulations.....	5
	B.    Architectural Requirements.....	8
IV.	Implementation Techniques.....	9
	A.    Additional Review.....	9
	B.    Overlay Districts.....	9
	C.    New Definitions and Permitting Requirements.....	10
V.	Current Standards.....	11
VI.	Recommendations.....	11
VII.	Conclusion.....	13
VIII.	Attachments.....	14



**City of Rockville  
Zoning Ordinance Revision  
Issue Paper**

# Mansionization

## I. INTRODUCTION

“Mansionization” is the process where existing single-family, detached homes are demolished or enlarged to create houses that are several times larger than the originals. Mansionization also occurs on infill lots where new houses do not conform to the character of the neighborhood. It is caused by a desire for modern amenities, such as large kitchens, cathedral ceilings, walk-in closets, and multiple bathrooms, that may not exist in older homes. This trend is a growing concern across the U.S. and has already had a great impact in built-out neighborhoods in Bethesda and Chevy Chase where vacant property is unavailable. Rockville is reaching built-out status and requests for demolitions to rebuild have become a regular occurrence.



### **Incompatible Reconstruction**

There are a number of competing arguments on either side of this issue. Property owners state that they have the right to use or develop property as long as they are in compliance with the legal development standards. Adjacent property owners however, may lament the loss of neighborhood character and the reduction in sunlight and air movement. In addition, there can be a reduction of privacy when a 40-foot structure towers over a one-story house and yard.

On the proponent side, building new homes where there is existing infrastructure gives residents an alternative to building further out and away from businesses. This helps reduce other urban problems, specifically sprawl and increased traffic.

Mansionization is not an issue with new development in Rockville. Most new developments have strict covenants and require architectural review approval for changes to existing houses. Large houses at minimum setbacks in places like the King Farm or Falls Grove remain in the same context as they existed when buyers purchased their home. If homeowners do not care for the home’s development style, they will buy elsewhere.

Mansionization, however, is a growing occurrence in some neighborhoods and will likely intensify as the current trend for larger housing progresses. Demolition and redevelopment with much larger houses is already a common occurrence in West End Park from Forest Avenue to I-270 on the north side of West Montgomery Avenue<sup>1</sup>.

Mansionization is primarily an issue where lots are not large enough to accommodate these large houses in an esthetically acceptable manner. It is also a potential issue in areas where the land values justify the expense of renovation or even demolition and reconstruction. This means that neighborhoods in the R-60, R-75 and R-90 zones are the ones most likely to be affected by this redevelopment process. There are no hard and fast criteria that can readily predict where mansionization may occur. However, some of the relevant factors include a high ratio of land value to improvement value; perceived desirability of the neighborhood; convenience to mass transit; convenience of the neighborhood to jobs or the central urban core. Within the City, neighborhoods other than the West End that may be susceptible to mansionization include Twinbrook, Twinbrook Forest, Croyden Park, and Lincoln Park.

Demolitions for redevelopment of new housing have been most active in the West End Park area of Rockville. This area has attracted small infill developers as the cost of a 9,000 square foot R-60 zoned lot and a house in this neighborhood ranges from \$300,000 to \$450,000, although it continues to climb with the housing market. In 2003, a house built in 1935 on Mannakee was sold for \$350,000 with redevelopment the ultimate intention. This was the record price for a teardown in 2003. The ceiling cost for a teardown structure that allows a reasonable profit has increased to \$400,000 in 2005. The average price is closer to \$360,000. This is fueled by the number of new or recent resale houses in West End Park that are marketed in excess of one million dollars.

Another category of redevelopment is the home buyer who purchases a small house in West End Park or East Rockville to demolish the existing house and build a new house for their own use.

## **II. GENERAL ISSUES**

The mansionization issue relates to in-fill development. As stated above, the controversy is not about large houses in general. The controversy is about large houses intruding upon neighborhoods of smaller houses. Residents of any neighborhood move in expecting a degree of stability. Many buy their house not only because of the house itself, but also because of their expectation of living in a stable community. The sudden intrusion of a house out of character with the neighborhood is destabilizing in their minds, particularly if it is next-door.

The following is background information to balance the various elements and arguments that are typically used when confronting larger infill structures in lower scale, existing neighborhoods.

---

<sup>1</sup> Statistics are difficult to assemble. The City's permitting software did not capture demolition as a separate category until 2001. Prior to this, demolition was permitted as part of a building permit. Of 55 applications for demolitions from January of 2001 to January of 2005, 55 applications for demolition had been received. Prior to 2001, demolition was issued as part of a building permit.

## **A. Potential Concerns Related to Mansionization**

1. **Property values:** Neighbors are often concerned that new homes will hinder their own housing value and change the character of the neighborhood. Higher property values in a neighborhood may change the demographics of an area and may make a once affordable, middle class community into a high priced area that few can afford. This alteration makes current residents feel like they do not belong in what was once their neighborhood. In addition, other neighbors claim that their property value will go down because their house is now valued less than the new/expanded houses.

Some neighbors object to new or expanded houses because they believe that their own taxes will rise as a result of the increased value of the nearby properties. Their concern may be warranted. Some jurisdictions welcome such redevelopment. The increase in property values adds to the tax base, helping to fund public infrastructure and schools.

2. **Infrastructure:** Infill may also burden the existing community's infrastructure. Utilities, such as water, sewer, stormwater controls, and electricity may have been designed to handle smaller houses and may not be able to accommodate large infill houses that would exhaust these resources.
3. **Environment:** The size of houses potentially can degrade the environment by increasing storm water runoff, removing existing trees, increasing lot coverage, and requiring more paving (of driveways, patios, etc.).
4. **Compatibility:** Large houses can be out of proportion and balance with the existing houses in the neighborhood. These new houses may be termed an "eyesore" because they do not match the architectural style of the neighborhood. The new houses often "loom" over neighboring smaller houses, especially at the minimum setback, restricting air and light and reducing privacy. The prevailing conditions were part of the original lot value and infringing on these rights threatens the overall property value and the property owner's rights. In addition to the inconvenience that the large house places on its immediate neighbors, it also weakens the character and texture of the neighborhood as a whole.
5. **Cost:** In today's market, the cost of additions or remodeling can be twice the cost of new construction. As a result, many homeowners choose to demolish instead. Demolition is less likely to retain the original character of a house than reconstruction.

## **B. Potential Benefits of Mansionization**

1. **Property Values:** Neighborhoods that don't improve are liable to stagnate and eventually degenerate. Viable communities are necessary to the cultural and economic well being of a city. It is to the City's ultimate benefit, as well as the neighborhood, to encourage improvement or redevelopment and maintenance of homes to maintain property values.

2. **Infrastructure:** Redevelopment in established neighborhoods may have some effect on sprawl. Instead of seeking out new developments located farther from the city, property owners will replace older homes with their own desired housing styles. Schools and other infrastructure already exists that can accommodate or be made to accommodate the home.
3. More compact development means more compact infrastructure. Infill helps reduce cost of new infrastructure because extensions to services do not need to be laid to support rural development. For example, long pipes and drains are not needed to service properties on larger and more spread out yards.
4. Although the redevelopment near the metro station and along Rockville Pike is providing new sources of housing, some property owners prefer single-family homes with yards. Likewise, many want to move into already settled communities that have close proximity to services such as transportation and commercial centers.
5. **Environmental:** Another argument to support mansionization is that it does not affect the potential amount of run-off on a property. Under current standards, a homeowner could cut down all his trees and pave virtually the entire yard. Current coverage limitations in the zoning ordinance are based on the *building* coverage, not total imperviousness. Driveways, patios, decks, etc. do not count toward the total percentage of lot coverage allowed, nor does Rockville limit the amount of a lot that can be covered with a patio or other material. Where there is open space, the Rockville City Code (§ 5-287, Property Maintenance Code) requires ground cover such as grass or mulch.
6. **Compatibility:** New development can include aesthetic touches, which may be lacking in existing structures. Zoning currently does not regulate aesthetics or require that the aesthetics of new development correspond to the character of the neighborhood. Instead, character elements and design are currently considered in changes to a site in designated historic district, as it would be in a designated neighborhood conservation overlay district that has adopted guidelines.
7. **Normal Progression:** Houses are lost due to natural causes as well. Hurricanes, fires, falling trees, and termite infestation make unanticipated changes to the structure of a house. Homeowners may wish to protect against natural deterioration by reconstruction or demolition, while remaining in their neighborhood. Permitting mansionization, therefore, would provide homeowners with options to maintain their property within their current neighborhood. Furthermore, it allows home owners to maximize the investment that they have made on their home.

### III. ALTERNATIVES

Methods have been used nationwide to control new development in existing neighborhoods and accomplish the goal of compatibility without stifling the opportunity for improvement and

expansion. No single answer has yet been found to adequately address all the concerns of mansionization. Monster homes are criticized not only for their sheer size, but also for the way in which size is further emphasized by the design of the house.

Other jurisdictions' solutions can be classified in two groups: 1) mass regulations and 2) architectural requirements. The following are some solutions that have been developed by other communities to address mansionization. They are listed in order from least aggressive to most aggressive. Some of these options appear to be more applicable to Rockville than others.

### **A. Mass Regulations**

Mass regulations control the scale of the home to its context. When a monster home is constructed in a neighborhood of small lots, the impact of mass is maximized. These regulations help to limit the impact of large structures.

1. **Building Envelope Regulations.** A traditional means of controlling home size is by specifying lot coverage limits (setbacks and percentage of usable space). Decreasing the allowed lot coverage and increasing building setbacks achieve a smaller envelope.

The basic matter that needs to be addressed is the relationship between the large house and its immediate neighbors, particularly along the side lot line. A sliding scale is needed to adequately accommodate the new house on different sized lots. A 5,000 square foot house on a half-acre lot with at least a 13-foot setback is not as intrusive as the same house on a 6,000 square foot lot with an 8-foot setback. It should also be understood that while a large lot can usually support a large house without infringing on its neighbors, it should not be developed with the intent to redevelop the lot for two houses in that same space where subdivision is a possibility.

Smaller bulk is achieved, overall, by decreasing the height or number of stories allowable. Some cities have reduced standard height restrictions to produce a shallower roof pitch, but still making a second-story addition possible. Regulations on height can be placed on a number of things. Besides total building height, height restrictions can be placed on attic floor levels, basements, and detached garages.

The percent of all building footprints or building coverage, allowed on a lot in Rockville ranges from 25% to 35% of the lot square footage. For Rockville's smallest permitted new lots, 6,000 square feet, this allows 2,100 square feet for each story. Rockville allows a height of 35 feet, measured to the midpoint of a gable roof. The midpoint of a very steep roof can be 8-10 feet, which allows another 8-10 feet above it or close to 45 total feet in height. By these standards, a new home on a 6,000 square foot lot with an attic and basement can legally be built in excess of 8,000 square feet and be very tall with an FAR of 1.3. Currently, new single-family home subdivisions have been built via the Planned Residential Unit method, and other than the two country clubs there are no large undeveloped parcels remaining. An overall change to the zoning standards in height,

setback and lot coverage would primarily affect new houses and large additions in older established subdivisions.

2. **Floor Area Ratio (FAR).** FAR regulations are one of the most common techniques for controlling oversized homes. Floor area ratio is a ratio of the gross square footage of the building or buildings on the lot divided by the square footage of the lot. FAR's allow planning departments to control the overall square footage of a home, including second-plus stories, as well as accessory structures such as garages and covered porches. Many communities implement a sliding scale for FAR's to meet the individual needs of the individual zoning districts, instead of one set FAR for the entire city.

Rockville has used FAR values for commercial buildings in urban commercial areas where front, side and rear setbacks are not the primary consideration. A simple lot percentage for the footprint of all buildings combined with the allowed height and setbacks has been used in Rockville to define the building envelope, not FAR.

FAR limits alone will not solve the problem. While FAR controls the bulk, it does not limit the amount a large house may impede on a neighbor. Regulations controlling height and setbacks must also be included in order to be effective.

Adopting an FAR standard is not the best method for Rockville. Areas of Rockville most vulnerable to mansionization are generally urban R-60 to R-90 lots ranging from 5,000 to 10,000 square feet with lot widths of 50 feet to 70 feet. With narrow lot widths, a tall building could easily be built within FAR standards and still cause problems to adjacent neighbors.

3. **Cubic Content Ration (CCR).** Cubic content ratios are similar to the floor area ratio. A CCR value, as used in Aspen, Colorado, considers the height of the building as well as the gross square footage of the building and the lots.

Like FAR, CCR is not a practical option for Rockville. Because there is no one-size-fits-all standard that can be applied to effectively address the concerns of mansionization, a better option would be to apply design guidelines on a neighborhood-by-neighborhood basis.

4. **Second Story Regulations.** Since mansionization often includes the addition of a second story, many mass regulations have begun to regulate the size and setbacks of second stories. This type of regulation leads to a stepped appearance, which limits the overall bulkiness of a larger house.

Second story ratios are placed in relation to the size of the first floor. Like FAR regulations, these ratios are often provided on a sliding scale for the various lot sizes (as seen in two examples below). The following chart is an example of some second story ratios.



Percentage Allowable	Ratio Comparison
35% or 600 sq. ft. (whichever is greater)	Of the first floor
50%	Of the first floor for lots under 5,000 sq. ft.
75%	Of the first floor for lots over 5,000 sq. ft.
60%	Of the first floor

In addition to, or as an alternative to ratios, some communities have imposed a second-story setback requirement to make the house appear less bulky. These could be placed on front or side setbacks. For example, where there is a five-foot side setback for the first story, a 10-foot side setback would be placed on the second story. Both setbacks are measured from the property line.

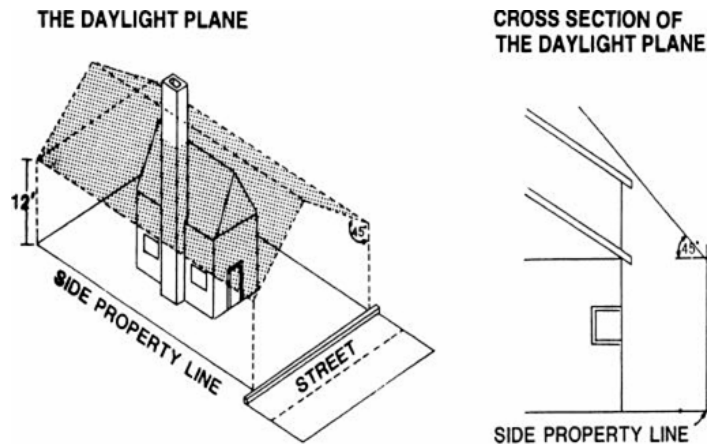


**Second Story Setback**

The drawback of a second-story setback or ratio is that a one-story home that is reconstructed may not be built to bear the load of a second story that is not flush with existing walls. A second-story addition can, therefore, be more architecturally challenging and more expensive than a simple second story on a new house. Nevertheless, second story ratios and setbacks have been shown to effectively minimize bulk by breaking up the façade of a home.

5. **Daylight Plane Regulation.** A complicated regulation is a daylight plane requirement. Drawing a vertical line from the side property line to a specified height on a house derives a daylight plane. An angle is then drawn off this line, which continues until it meets the angle drawn from the opposite side of the house (see illustration below). The more restrictive the height/angle used, the more effective the daylight plane is at reducing mass. The daylight plane creates an imaginary envelope around the sides and top of a house that limits its height and width. Any part of the house, which protrudes out of this envelope, is considered to be an obstruction that can reduce the solar access of the adjacent house.

With regulating daylight planes, it is important to include both exemptions and demonstrative illustrations. Exemptions may include dormer windows, gables, fireplaces, and antennas. Illustrations may include something like the following:



Daylight planes confusing alternative, that staff does not recommend implementing. In practice, the daylight plane serves much the same purpose as a second story ratio or setback because it forces the second-story to be stair-stepped in. Daylight plane regulations, however, are more complicated to implement. The plane must be calculated and permitted exemptions reviewed on a case-by-case basis. The plane is particularly challenging to calculate on slopes, where it must be done in increments. The daylight plan must be closely keyed to the side setbacks of a home, as the point of which the angle intersects the home is greatly influenced by the distance of the home from the side property line. The further the home is from the property line, the taller the addition may be. Thus, the daylight plane is most restrictive in homes with small side setbacks.

## B. Architectural Requirements

While architectural requirements protect neighborhood character, they can also help prevent look-alike areas. The key to such requirements is to strike the right chord. The language cannot be too restrictive, allowing for the imagination of architects, but not unconstitutionally vague either.

1. **Rooflines.** Major rooflines on a property can accentuate the mass of a building or lead to a monotonous street if constructed the same way on a number of houses along a block. As a result, architectural requirements can impose a change in roof plane, a mix of roof styles or materials, and a number of decorative options.
2. **Entries.** Some cities require clearly defined, prominent primary entrances that feature some form of design element. Design elements may include decorative doors; porticos, arches, or pillars; or peaked roof forms.
3. **Façade.** Mass can be accentuated when a home lacks definition in its façade, making it look square and bulky. Unbroken multi-story elements, such as towers, entryways, and



**Pitched Roof Options**

walls can also accentuate mass. Some communities require that façades be broken up, that a mix of building materials be used, or that decorative windows or doors be installed to reduce the impression of mass.

4. **Windows.** Some cities ban windows on the side walls of home to protect the privacy of neighbors. Banning windows is unnecessarily restrictive, however, as there are many window styles and glass types currently available. Opaque glass, including frosted and tinted glass, patterned glass, and glass blocks can afford both light and privacy.

#### IV. IMPLEMENTATION TECHNIQUES

In addition to applying mass regulations and architectural guidelines, some cities have initiated additional review requirements or overlay zoning requirements to protect against mansionization problems.

**A. Additional Review.** To ensure adequate application of bulk requirements, some jurisdictions have initiated additional review and regulation requirements for additions of second stories or any expansions greater than a set percentage of the existing building area. Some communities even require a notification and comment period for adjacent property owners when two-story construction is proposed.

For example, in Menlo Park, California, a two-tier system of review was established. If construction meets the requirements for lot area, floor area limits, lot coverage, setback, daylight planes, permeable surface, and other basic elements, an applicant can merely file for a building permit. If, however, the owners of adjacent properties approve, more permissive standards could be applied (up to a set limit) including setback encroachments, and more daylight plane flexibility upon review by staff. Failure to gain neighbors' approval requires approval of necessary permits by the Planning Commission.

#### **B. Overlay Districts:**

1. One solution is to implement historic districts, where eligible and appropriate. Historic districts aim to protect a community's historic significance in terms of the contribution to the national, state or local pattern of history. Design guidelines which restrict mansionization are implemented and enforced to ensure protection of these resources. Alterations to the house are reviewed by a historic district commission, which determines if they are appropriate to the community based on established criteria.

Of the properties identified for potential mansionization expansion in Rockville, only a small number are currently designated in an historic district. While current exterior alterations guides for Rockville's Historic Resources regulate exterior materials, roofing, windows and doors, and color selection, these may or may not be the types of regulations to apply throughout the city. Under the guidelines, new additions must respect the building's character and protect the neighborhood's feel. New additions are encouraged

in back and not up. While these are potential guidelines that Mayor and Council may wish to pursue, if historic district overlay is chosen, these guidelines will be further reviewed for their impact on mansionization.

2. Conservation overlay districts are another technique that imposes zoning and development standards that reflect the existing conditions. This works well in an architecturally cohesive community with the same basic character, height of buildings, and style. It does require research and documentation of existing conditions to back up the new development standards.

Annapolis has imposed conservation districts with its Eastport District, which sets a height standard for each block based on the existing residential height. Cities in Kentucky have used neighborhood conservation districts in both urban and suburban communities. In both cases, the adopted guidelines deal with lot size, configuration and lot layout as well as setbacks, height, lot coverage and architectural design. (Some examples are: prohibiting front-loading projecting garages in areas where detached rear garages predominate; and prohibiting cul de sac subdivision where square lots fronting the street are normal.)

These districts may be implemented either by guidelines or adopted as regulations, thus having the force of law. Newport Virginia has an intense educational program that persuades new builders to construct compatible new homes and additions via a design handbook. This tends to work best, however, if the area is largely owner-occupied and not the target of individual infill developers.

#### Applicability:

Many subdivisions were created as approved Planned Residential Unit Developments or Comprehensive Planned Development that have established guidelines and review procedures for additions and new constructions. Other subdivisions have Homeowners Association Review for exterior modifications and new construction. These areas do not need an additional overlay district and review process. Examples are: Some portions of Rockshire, Fallsmead, New Mark Commons, Carter Hill, Fallsbend, Flint Ledge Estates, Rose Hill Falls, Rose Hill, King Farm and Fallsgrove.

Mansionization controls may be appropriate for older areas still covered by the traditional Euclidian zoning. This would include West End Park, East Rockville areas including Lincoln Park, College Gardens and Twinbrook. Community support is essential. Conservation districts do not succeed unless the community actively supports the program. Some incentives, such as workshops on design and the process may help. For many neighborhoods, stability and clear future direction are incentive enough.

- C. **New Definitions and Permitting Requirements**— An additional alternative to minimize the impact of mansionization is to redefine “demolition” and “substantial alteration” to

encourage less destruction to the original dwelling and promote appropriate additions as an alternative to complete demolition.

Under current Rockville standards, reconstruction requires only a building permit. If there are encroachments or the building is too high, Planning Staff will delay issuance of a permit until the problem is resolved. Additionally, the current definition of reconstruction is vague, leaving no set standard to apply throughout the city.

With regard to nonconforming uses, there is a more defined guideline for reconstruction. The Zoning Ordinance has a provision that if more than 50% of a nonconforming structure is destroyed or damaged, then any nonconformity must be corrected. There is no specific section in the Zoning Ordinance that address reconstruction. Section 25-164 addresses the fact that the only structural alteration that may be made to a structural nonconformity is their removal. Section 25-165 provides for its removal if more than 50% is damaged or destroyed.

## **V. CURRENT STANDARDS**

The tables of development standards that are currently applied to construction or reconstruction from § 25-311 of the Zoning Ordinance are attached at the end of this document for reference.

## **VI. RECOMMENDATIONS**

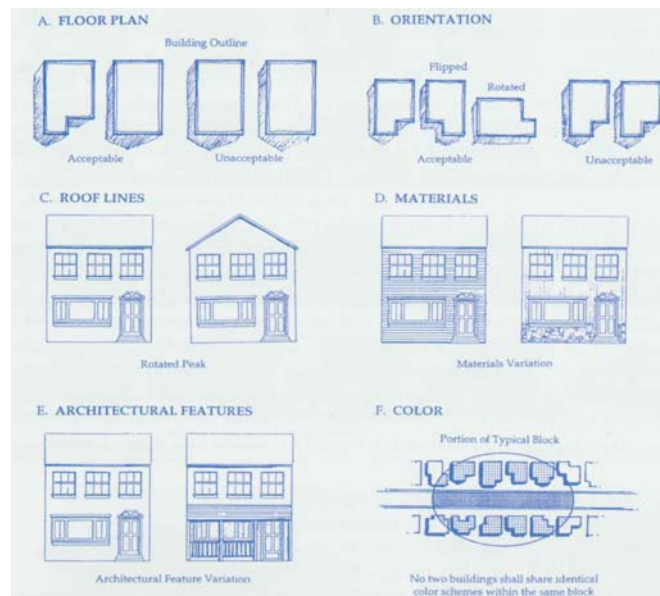
**A.** The first policy under the Housing section of the Master Plan is to encourage the maintenance and upgrade of existing housing stock. It is, therefore, not the goal of the city to restrict maintenance, but certain steps are needed to protect against the negative implications of mansionization. There is no one-size-fits all answer the mansionization issue. After evaluating the pros and cons of mansionization, the staff makes the following recommendations for the Mayor and Council's consideration.

1. Limit any mansionization regulation to the 3 smallest-lot zones—R-60, R-75, R-90. Beyond these, the lot sizes and related setbacks are large enough that the perceived impact is substantially reduced.
2. Modify and add definitions for demolition and substantial alteration. Current definitions are too lenient and thus must be adapted for today's values. Substantial alteration should include the tear down of more than 50% of the original walls. Demolition should include teardown of the roof, foundation, and two or more of the original exterior walls. Additionally, leveling the house to the foundation (keeping the foundation intact) should also be considered demolition.
3. Establish policies and procedures for the establishment of neighborhood conservation districts. Such a process is currently being considered for the Lincoln Park area as a part of the neighborhood planning efforts currently under way. Such districts should include

design guidelines to provide flexibility in design and siting. This will give property owners more leeway with their designs and alterations, which in turn creates a more interesting streetscape and avoids monotonous “cookie-cutter” homes. The City might offer examples and suggestions for compatible style elements and alterations. This will also speed up the process if the guidelines can suggest alternatives that do not require extensive review.

Suggested guidelines include the following:

- a) Adequate flexibility to accommodate topographical features;
- b) Adequate setbacks to maintain all four facades of the dwelling;
- c) Setbacks to compensate for shadow casting;
- d) Area limitations for accessory uses, such as garages, sheds, and pools; and
- e) Roof and entry alternatives.



**Example of Design Guidelines**

The neighborhood conservation districts should be initiated by the neighborhoods themselves, rather than be dictated by the City. The process should likely be similar to the current process for designating historic district zones in the City.

- 4. As a potential adjunct to the conservation district concept, consider requiring additional side yard setback for height above a certain level. Our initial recommendation would be two foot of additional side yard setback for each foot of height above 25 feet. Twenty-five feet is high enough to accommodate a typical two-story house. The recommended two-to-one ratio would mean that a 35 foot high building would have to be set back an

additional 20 feet beyond the minimum side yard setback on each side. On a minimum-width 60-foot R-60 lot, the maximum height house could be only 20 feet wide, certainly an undesirable design.

5. As part of the comprehensive review of the zoning ordinance, revise bulk standards in zoning code for smaller residential districts, especially height requirements and the measurement of height.

**B.** Although not directly a part of this issue, the Mayor and Council may wish to consider make existing historic houses non-conforming that may not meet today's zoning standards. These houses are also considered structural nonconformities, and cannot be replaced in kind if substantially damaged. Since these structures help define the character of the historic district, they should be allowed to be replaced in kind.

## **VII. CONCLUSION**

There are two sides to consider with regard to mansionization, potential costs and benefits. Regardless of whether mansionization is deemed a threat or a natural cycle for communities, it is a matter deserving attention. If ignored, larger in-fill homes could suffocate a community quickly and erase the elements that make that area unique. Communities must work with their residents, government, and outside developers to determine the best approach in ensuring that they do not lose the character of their neighborhood.

In-fill housing may help discourage sprawl; however, it will not eliminate the problems of sprawl altogether. It is possible to control the scale of the in-fill housing, while at the same time discouraging sprawl. It is possible to dissuade people from building structures that take up more space, and encourage more luxurious models that repeat the scale of the buildings around them. The customized guidelines made for each neighborhood can assist with this negotiation. Likewise, the staff does not want the community to lose the opportunity for improvement. Improvements can be made to the homes and lots without competing with the existing character of the neighborhood. It is the responsibility of the city to make those alternatives apparent and to educate the public on appropriate design standards.

Aesthetics can be regulated when the appearance contributes to the district's character. The staff suggests designating conservation districts in order to preserve the unique architectural and historic characteristics of certain neighborhoods. The goal of these districts is to recognize when a community shares certain elements, whether they are architectural or historical, and offer them protection to save these elements.

The ultimate goal is to respect the current property owners' community while still allowing for appropriate growth and change. Rockville does not seek to eliminate property rights or stifle the community's wishes to grow and improve. The problem is a matter of scale and awareness of design elements. A delicate balance must be made to support the desired house size without infringing on the rights of its neighbor. The owners should also seek to build a home that blends

well with the rest of the architecture on the street. Guidelines will help developers and private property owners with their decisions to rebuild or remodel. Awareness and education is the best tool.

## **ATTACHMENTS:**

Pictorial Appendix

Table of Residential Development Standards

Map: Recent Demolition Permits

Map: R-60 Properties by Value and Size

## **Background Information**

Nasser, Haya El. "Mega-mansions' upside: They help reduce suburban sprawl." USA Today. March 13, 2002.

Barnes, Linna et al. "A Pictorial Study of Problems with 'Story' and 'Height of Building' in the Montgomery County Zoning Ordinance." April 20, 2004.

"Additions and New Construction." Raleigh Historic District Commission.

Ramshaw, Emily. "The McMansion Next Door." The Dallas Morning News. May 1, 2005.

Samuelson, Robert J. "Homes as Hummers." The Washington Post, July 13, 2005

Miller, Julia H. "Neighborhood Conservation Districts." The Alliance Review. November/December 2003.

S:\Zoning Ordinance Revision\Issue Papers\residential.doc